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The people of Nigeria have many grievances with their elected government. They can be grouped into three major areas or categories: poor governance, through rampant misadministration and widespread corruption; poor economic development and staggering levels of poverty; and an overall tenuous security environment, which results in an embattled subsistence way of life. Although the GON has attempted to modernize its society as a means to improving the everyday citizen's quality of life, many of its policies are counter-productive and fail to address the root causes of societal conflict. An analysis of the cultural and political identities of ethnicity, religion and regional affiliation provide a greater understanding into the sources of division within the country and point to nationalism as a prerequisite for any significant change in governance.

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"NIGERIA: ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK"

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

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Contents

Abstract

Nigeria: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

The people of Nigeria have many grievances with their elected government. They can be grouped into three major areas or categories: poor governance, through rampant misadministration and widespread corruption; poor economic development, resulting in staggering levels of poverty; and an overall tenuous security environment, which results in an embattled subsistence way of life. Although the GON has attempted to modernize its society as a means to improving the everyday citizen's quality of life, many of its policies are counter-productive and fail to address the root causes of societal conflict. An analysis of the cultural and political identities of ethnicity, religion and regional affiliation provide a greater understanding into the sources of division within the country and point to nationalism as a prerequisite for any significant change in governance.

Introduction

The people of Nigeria have many grievances with their elected government. Throughout the Government of Nigeria (GON) 52 years of history it has struggled greatly with legitimacy, corruption, self-interested leadership, and an inability and/or unwillingness to meet the needs of its people despite abundant national resources. The peoples' many grievances with the GON can be grouped into three major areas or categories: poor governance, through rampant misadministration and widespread corruption; poor economic development, resulting in staggering levels of poverty; and an overall tenuous security environment, that results in an embattled subsistence way of life. Although the GON has attempted to modernize its society as a means to improving the everyday citizen's quality of life, many of its policies are counter-productive and only serve to exacerbate the people's dissatisfaction with their government. At the root of the problem, the government policies fail to ameliorate the cultural and societal tensions that result from the competing ethnic, religious, and regional political identities of its people.

Geographic Impact on Nigerian Culture

Considered by many as the "Giant of Africa", the relatively young nation-state of Nigeria exercises a significant degree of influence on the African continent by virtue of its populations and its abundant natural resources. An active supporter of UN Peace Operations, Nigeria is a member of several international organizations: the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Its people are a diverse collection of population groups

that identify themselves along ethnic, regional and religious divisions.[1] The population of

Nigeria is approximately 170 million, representing more than one seventh of the overall

population of Africa. With more than 250 ethnic groups and languages, the modern nation of

Nigeria is more a product of its colonial history than that of the ethnic groupings or self-

determination efforts of its people.[2] The three largest ethnic groups consist of the Hausa-

Fulani (30%), the Yoruba (21%), and the Igbo (18%). The remaining 31% of the population

are divided into a large number of smaller minority groups which include the Igala, Nupe,

Kanuri, Ibibio, Tiv, and Ijaw.[3]

Understanding the diverse geographic makeup of Nigeria is central to understanding

the roots of the current ethno-regional composition of its people. Differences in geography

contribute to the formation of vastly different societies within in a country that is roughly

twice the size of California (356,669 square miles).[4] The southern coastal region of the

country is dominated by the mangrove swamps and tropical rainforests of the Niger River

Delta. The small fishing and farming villages of the Ijo and Kalabari are found here.[5]

Moving inland, the next major geographic feature is known as the forest belt where the

Yoruba, Igbo, Edo, and Ibibio ethnic groups live. Farming societies in this area are larger in

size compared with the coastal region.[6] Beyond the forest belt, lie the plateaus and hills of

the interior where the Niger-Benue River Valley supports societies of varying size and

composition. The northern most portion of the country consists of the savannah region that is

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[1] April A. Gordon, *Nigeria's Diverse Peoples*. (ABC CLIO Inc., 2003), 1.
[2] Ibid., 2.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid., 4.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

part of the Western Sudan.[7] The hot, dry climate and grassy plains support both livestock herding and the farming. There are however, large areas of infertile soil where cultivation is not sustainable due to the impacts of deforestation and desertification. The Hausa-Fulani ethnic group is largely concentrated in this region. The diverse character of Nigeria's geography has resulted in an even greater diversity in its people and it has had a significant impact on the character of their numerous ethnic groups.

Nigerian Pre-Independence History

From an archeological standpoint, there is paucity of evidence to define the exact historical origins of the Nigerian people, "much less is known about where these groups came from, how long they have lived where they are, and how they are connected to prehistoric occupants of Nigeria and elsewhere."[8] The significance of this fact is that the people of Nigeria are continually seeking to identify, describe, and define the character of their specific ethnic group. This is an ongoing process that has a significant impact on Nigerian society, "…ultimately it is what people *believe* about their own identities and those of other groups that affects their social reality and, consequently their relationship with others."[9]

Throughout its pre-colonial history, the people of Nigeria were largely defined by their ethnic-regional associations and internal migration patterns. Great Britain administered Nigeria as a colony for 56 years, from 1914 to 1960. In that time boundaries, regions, ethnic identities were all manipulated for the sake of administration and governance as the British

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[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid., 10.

sought the most effective formula for controlling the vast territory and its diverse people.[10]

Colonialism also greatly contributed to the spread of Christianity and Islam in different parts

of the country. Christianity, along with other Western influences, took root in the south with

close ties to the economic and educational development of the region. By contrast Islam

spread in the north under increasingly independent, conservative ruling elites who sought to

minimize any Western influence.[11] Today the countries religious demographics are

approximately 50% Muslim, 40% Christian, and 10% adhering to indigenous beliefs.

During the colonial era, the Yoruba were the first ethnic group to benefit from

Western education and influence.[12] As a result, they garnered greater political representation

and power within the British colonial system. This political advantage carried over into the

post-colonial era and resulted in political strife with the Igbo, who sought to gain greater

influence following Nigerian independence.[13] The Hausa-Fulani, a close merger of two

separate ethnic groups, remained largely disinterested in the political tensions between the

Yoruba, Igbo, and other minority ethnic groups. Their fairly homogenous society, common

Islamic beliefs, and relative autonomy of government caused their northern region to flourish

under British rule.[14] This dynamic reversed itself however, and by the end of the colonial

period the economic and political balance of power transferred to the southern portion of the

country. As Nigeria's oil industry developed, the economic system of the north continued to

weaken as government efforts centered on the development of the oil industry at the expense

of the northern region's agriculture and trading economy.

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[10] Ibid., 97.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Godfrey N. Uzoigwe, *"Assessing the History of Ethnic/Religious Relations"* in *Inter-ethnic and Religious Conflict Resolution in Nigeria,* edited by Ernest E. Uwazie, 7-17. (Lexington Books, 1999), 12.
[13] Ibid., 9.
[14] Ibid., 14.

Like the Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani, the Igbo formed as a largely linguistic community. More than two hundred groups were united through common language and similar local customs.[15] Recognizing that the Yoruba benefited significantly from British influence during the colonial era, they readily accepted and embraced Western influence and education as a means of challenging the Yoruba's political control. Their work ethic and willingness to sacrifice for personal and generational advancement, led them to pursue independence.[16]

Nigerian Civil War

Seven years following its independence, Nigeria was engulfed in a brutal civil war in which the Midwest and Niger River Delta region known as Biafra attempted to secede from the First Republic (1967-1970). Fearful of the "northern domination" of the Hausa-Fulani and distrustful of any profitable alliance with the Yoruba, the Igbo lost all confidence in the central government's ability to adequately represent them and safeguard their interests.[17] The attempted secession of Biafra was the first occurrence among the newly self-determined colonies of Africa and it received little international support. Almost all of the nascent African nation-states were fearful that a successful breakaway of Biafra, under Igbo leadership, would set a dangerous precedent for other secessionist ethnic groups throughout the continent.[18] The civil war lasted three years and caused extensive damage to the nation. The federal government was so brutal in its suppression of the Igbo separatists' movement that many historians considered it a form of genocide.

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[15] April A. Gordon, *Nigeria's Diverse Peoples*. (ABC CLIO Inc., 2003), 15.
[16] Godfrey N. Uzoigwe, *"Assessing the History of Ethnic/Religious Relations"* in *Inter-ethnic and Religious Conflict Resolution in Nigeria,* edited by Ernest E. Uwazie, 7-17. (Lexington Books, 1999), 9.
[17] April A. Gordon, *Nigeria's Diverse Peoples*. (ABC CLIO Inc., 2003), 142.
[18] Ibid., 143.

In the process, Nigeria gained a full appreciation for the devastation of ethnic conflicts and emerged committed to establishing a political order that would help prevent its recurrence.[19] As a result, the power of the three dominant ethnic groups (Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo) was diminished and the smaller minority groups gained in stature and influence.[20] President Gowon pursued a reasoned approach to the reintegration of Biafra through a noteworthy, "No victor, no vanquished policy."[21] Despite the country's many efforts at reconciliation, many Nigerians still blame the Igbo for the tremendous damage caused during the civil war.[22] Ethnic tensions between these three groups and religious tensions between the Islamic north and the mostly Christian south continue to have a significant impact on society and governance into present day. It has cemented the popular belief that ethnic identification and regionalism were the only true sources of security within the country.[23]

The Nigerian civil war also had a negative impact on the organizational character of the military. After wresting control from the civilian government for the sake of preserving the Nigerian union, senior military leadership became increasingly corrupt. A series of military coups followed in close succession adding to the turmoil and deterioration of security in the country. As the military elite consolidated their power and economic gains, they became less and less willing to be held accountable, let alone relinquish control back to civilian rule. Similarly, senior civil service officials became allied with the military elite and actively sought to keep them in control for their mutual benefit.[24] Political power was

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[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., 146
[21] Ibid., 144.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid., 145.
[24] Ibid., 146.

concentrated at the federal level leaving the newly created states weak and ineffectual. Of note, the central government assumed control of its oil revenues and distributed its revenues as it saw fit. The states lost all control of their respective local economies and became solely dependent on the federal government for their income and administration.[25] Discrimination against the Igbo extended into the officer ranks of the military and they no longer held any significant positions of leadership or authority within Nigeria's military.[26]

Grievances and Counterproductive Efforts

Understanding the ethnic, religious and regional divisions of the Nigerian people adds clarity to the nation's grievances and the failings of the federal government. Although the GON has attempted to address many of these grievances, their efforts have yielded little success. This is largely due to the fact that its approach and policies for addressing these extreme societal problems are often counterproductive in that they reinforce ethnic, religious and regional identities rather providing a means of easing societal tensions.

Poor Governance and Corruption

The first major grievance of the Nigerian people is the government's failure to establish true legitimacy and representation. The GON has repeatedly engaged in electoral malpractice resulting in allegations of mismanagement, voter fraud, and results manipulation. Consequently, Nigerians have a very negative perception of their electoral process. It is

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[25] Ibid., 147.
[26] Ibid.

widely believed that all elections are rigged by those already in power.[27] This greatly

undermines the legitimacy of the GON mandate both domestically and internationally.

Nigerians also believe that their federal government is too centralized. They desire

greater decentralization and participation by increasing the political and financial autonomy

of the states. This would require an adjustment or recalculation of the current oil revenue

allocation formula. The GON has attempted to assuage the concerns of its people by creating

new states that better reflect the ethnic diversity of the nation. Yet the net effect is that the

federal government has grown stronger while the regional political power of the states has

grown weaker.[28]

The determination of rights to resources is a contested aspect of the Nigerian political

system. Through the application or reinforcement of "federal character", the GON has put in

place policies that favor indigene over settler population groups.[29] On the surface, this policy

may seem beneficial to ensuring ethnic-regional representation is preserved, but it also makes

outsiders into second class citizens. When one considers the diversity of minority ethnic

groups and the historical migration and intermingling of the population, we can see that this

policy serves to cement ethnic divisions and strife. The irony is that by imposing an unequal

federal approach, the GON is in fact reinforcing ethno-regional tensions.

Along with failed elections, corruption and patronage, idenity politics greatly

undermine the GON's legitimacy. The people of Nigeria have long demanded for improved

governance to eliminate corruption and improve upon the government's level of

professionalism, fairness and ability to deliver public services. Sadly, the GON has failed to

[27] John Campbell, *Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink.* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2011), 17.
[28] April A. Gordon, *Nigeria's Diverse Peoples*. (ABC CLIO Inc., 2003), 268.
[29] Ibid.

address corruption and patronage within its political system and there are insufficient government offices that have the position and authority to ensure political transparency and accountability.[30] By undermining the effectiveness of the judiciary branch of government through patronage appointments and weak enforcement capabilities, the GON has failed to properly support the rule of law.[31]

Poor Economic Development and Poverty

The second set of grievances of the Nigerian people relate directly to their appalling level of poverty. The GON has completely failed to meet the health and welfare needs of its people. Senior government officials have demonstrated a lack of commitment to the advancement of its society and failed to provide true development oriented leadership. Instead, they have turned to industry and the private sector without providing the vision and legislative oversight that would focus results on the segments of the population in greatest need.[32] The GON has failed to focus civil services on the segment of the population that needs them the most. An example of this are its public private party (PPP) housing ventures that provided low cost housing for the upper and middle income brackets. No guidance or provisions were placed in the contracts to ensure the majority of the PPP housing would support the lower income majority.[33]

Additionally, the GON has not directing enough of its oil revenues into public health services as a means of improving quality of life and preserving human capital. A 2004

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[30] Ibid., 269.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Tolu Lawal, et al. "Governance Crisis and the Crisis of Leadership in Nigeria," International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, Vol. 2, No. 7 (July 2012): 189.

[33] Eziyi Offia Ibem, "An Assessment of the Role Government Agencies in Public-Private Partnerships in Housing Delivery in Nigeria," *Journal of Construction in Developing Countries* (Vol. 15(2), 2010), 34.

Nigeria Living Standard Survey (NLSS) found that 54.2 percent of the population lived well below the poverty line. The study further estimated that the poverty level was 72% in the Northeast, 27% in the South, and 35% in the Niger River Delta. These figures highlight a significant disparity within different regions and associated ethnic groups. In sharp contrast to the poverty levels, Nigeria had 115 billionaires (in US dollars) during the same time period highlighting a vast income inequality gap.[34]

The same NLSS study concluded that the overall evaluation of Nigeria's health system ranked it 187 out of 191 nations.[35] The under-five infant mortality rate is approximately 157 for every 1000 live births.[36] This rate is more than 19 times that of the U.S. Moreover, the statistic varies greatly from region to region, reaching as high as 222 deaths per 1000 live births in the Northeast as compared to 89 deaths per 1000 live births in the Southwest.[37] This disparity is one of many poverty issues that help fuel the ethno-regional divisions of the Nigerian society. If we look at immunization rates, the common trend of regional disparity emerges again. The national statistics for complete immunization of children under five is 22.7%, but the range is from a low of 6% in the Northeast to a high of 42.9% in the Southwest.[38] In addition to high infant mortality and extremely low immunization rates, Nigerian children face significant malnourishment. Forty percent of Nigerian children suffer from stunted growth rates.[39]

Many authors believe Nigeria has fallen prey to the resource curse or Dutch disease. Its over reliance on the oil industry to drive its economic growth has led to a one-dimensional

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[34] John Campbell, *Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink.* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2011), 13
[35] Ibid., 12.
[36] Ibid., 11.
[37] Ibid., 12.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., 13.

economy that fails to meet the basic needs of its people. National infrastructure and

agriculture have atrophied and suffered greatly. The decay of the nation's infrastructure has

even affected the oil industry itself. All of Nigeria's petroleum refineries are routinely

offline causing intermittent energy availability to fuel other industrial and/or agricultural

segments of the economy.[40] The elite leadership of Nigeria has further exacerbated the

situation by seeking short-term benefits that favor its patronage networks over long term

economic growth.[41] By overvaluing its currency, the GON has placed itself at a decided

disadvantage to compete in the international market and thereby driving its domestic

economy into an even steeper decline. Not surprisingly, widespread foreign investment that

would advance economic growth outside of the oil industry is unable to take root in Nigeria's

current economic environment.[42] A reinvestment of oil revenues into improved

infrastructure and lines of communication would help diversify their economy and foster

broader economic growth.[43]

The Honorable Mr. John Campbell, a former U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria, succinctly

summarized the root causes of Nigeria's shocking and wide spread poverty by stating,

"…bad governance, crony capitalism, and spectacular levels of corruption impoverish the

country."[44] The irony of Nigeria's situation is that they have an abundance of natural

resources, both petroleum and arable land, to support wide spread economic growth for the

betterment of its people. Although the revenues of the oil industry continue to drive national

income up, the standard of living for the common Nigerian citizen continues to fall, making

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[40] Ibid., 15.
[41] Ibid., 17.
[42] Ibid., 16.
[43] Godfrey N. Uzoigwe, *"Assessing the History of Ethnic/Religious Relations"* in *Inter-ethnic and Religious Conflict Resolution in Nigeria,* edited by Ernest E. Uwazie, 7-17. (Lexington Books, 1999), 14.
[44] John Campbell, *Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink.* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2011), 17.

the current standard of living lower than what it was at the time of Nigeria's independence.[45]

In light of the central governments failures, the people of Nigeria are calling for the

diversification and growth of the non-oil sectors of the economy. It's believed that this will

alleviate their extreme poverty, improve their living standards, and make ordinary citizens

into stakeholders for a more peaceful, unified state.

Poor Security and Lack of Conflict Resolution

The third set of grievances all relate to the lack of security and rule of law for the

protection of life and basic human rights. Each region or state is dependent on the GON for

its security. The states have limited ability and financial resources to form their own local

police forces. Conflict in Nigeria takes on many forms from ethnic and religious based

armed conflict, to labor unrest and student protests. Criminal behavior includes armed

robbery, contract killings, hijackings, and vigilantism.[46] The Nigerian police force (NPF) is

often at the center of these conflicts. Their role is very inconsistent serving at times as

arbiter, aggressor or even victim depending on the circumstances.[47] Consequently,

Nigerian's have very little confidence in the police's ability to protect them and justly uphold

the rule of law.[48] This lack of confidence also translates into very little community

involvement at the local level.[49] Successive regimes have used the NPF as a means of

oppressing and controlling the population. The NPF's track record of heavy handed tactics

has at times led to armed revolts from the populace.[50] Many communities have gone so far

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[45] Ibid., 11.
[46] F.O. Nyenmutu Roberts, "Toward a Police/Community Relations Program" in Inter-ethnic and Religious Conflict Resolution in Nigeria, edited by Ernest E. Uwazie, 137-153. (Lexington Books, 1999), 137.
[47] Ibid., 140.
[48] Ibid., 137.
[49] Ibid., 139.
[50] Ibid., 144.

as to establish their own security systems or vigilante groups in order to compensate for the police's ineffectiveness.[51] Moreover, the imposition of a federal police system, with close ties to the military elite ruling class, continues to feed the people's mistrust of what they perceive as a corrupt and self-interested government.

The Nigerian people want local and federal police forces that will safeguard the human rights, freedom and equality of all Nigerian citizens. The GON has failed to involve local communities and state governments in its policing efforts. Their largely federal approach is void of the local community support that is essential to effective security and civil order.[52] A majority of the country wishes to uphold Nigeria's character as a secular state and ensure full protection for freedom of religion. They also look to their government to establish true civilian control over the military and ultimately promote national unity through peace and security for all citizens.

Political Character vs. Nigerian Optimism

Nigeria's political culture is largely a product of the ethno-regional tensions that have existed throughout its ancient and modern history. The additional division of religious ideology has served to widen the gap between the northern and southern parts of the country, as well as make uneasy allies of the Yoruba and Igbo. In Nigeria identity politics reign supreme. Political action and movements are sought through ethnic, religious and regional affiliations.[53] Political power is the sole source for acquiring resources and advancement for the populace and it is therefore hotly contested. Often these conflicts involve significant

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[51] Ibid., 146.
[52] Tolu Lawal, et al. "Governance Crisis and the Crisis of Leadership in Nigeria," International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, Vol. 2, No. 7 (July 2012): 189.
[53] April A. Gordon, *Nigeria's Diverse Peoples*. (ABC CLIO Inc., 2003), 119.

outbreaks of violence. The trappings of corruption and patronage are hard to escape and they

continue to undermine the pursuit of democracy and true national unity.[54] The corruption,

patronage, and misadministration that characterize Nigerian politics cannot be simply

attributed to greed and self-interest. A professor of sociology at Winthrop University and

widely published African analyst, April A. Gordon suggests that,

> The idea of public good that encompasses 'everyone in Nigeria' is an abstract concept
> that is hard to embrace by people who in many cases still do not define themselves as
> Nigerians and have little in common with most other Nigerians. Similarly, such
> rational-legal norms as the impartial rule of law may seem impractical to politicians
> whose legitimacy and hold on power and income depend on what they can deliver
> through their patron-client networks. [55]

This leads many Nigerians to be very cynical about their brand of democracy and

they have little faith in the true legitimacy of their elected government. Their assessment is

that their political leaders consistently act in their own self-interest and in those of their

influential political patrons. Despite the transition to civilian rule, the Government of

Nigeria remains under the powerful influence of the northern region's ethno-military elite

giving them a stranglehold on the government controlled revenues of the oil industry.[56] All

the while, the vast majority of Nigerians continue to suffer. The income inequality gap

between the ultra-rich elite and the poverty stricken masses continues to grow. All of this

serves to reinforce the ethno-regional and religious divisions within Nigerian society. The

vicious cycle will likely continue unless a fundamental cultural shift takes place.

Nevertheless, democracy is still highly valued and sought after. Many Nigerians are

willing to accept great personal risk and potential loss of life in its pursuit.[57] Nigerians

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[54] Ibid., 120.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., 119.

abroad are actively supporting the development of strong civil society groups that compel the

Government of Nigeria to become more accountable and responsive to the needs of its

people.[58] The Westernized, well-educated people that make up the Nigerian diaspora are

helping to break the traditional paradigms of ethnic, religious, and regional cultural identities.

They are helping to redefine them under more inclusive, tolerant, and humanistic democratic

values.[59] Additionally, education, media and globalization are serving to strengthen the

movement within the country as well. The proliferation of English or "pidgin" as a common

language along with Western cultural influences in dress, music, movies, food, and sports are

helping to create a larger common identity or Nigerian national culture. Nigeria's brand of

nationalism is distinctly Western and African at the same time.[60] Most Nigerians are

genuinely optimistic, believing that they will someday be able to resolve their many

differences. Dr. Chukuwuemeka Ezeife, a special advisor to President Obsanjo during his

first term, made the following plea in the Nigerian newspaper the *Guardian*,

> Nigeria can be made good. I can see Nigeria, re-organised after a national dialogue, and things being to work. A re-organised One Nigeria will be in the long-term interest of every Nigerian. Any intellectual Nigerian who can think in terms of the costs and benefits to him, of his continued membership of such One Nigeria, should see that his costs are smaller than his benefits… Only negative emotions and shallow, short-range thinking can lead to a different judgment… God not the British, created One Nigeria. And God does not make a mistake! [61]

Clearly the Nigerian people long for a more unified, prosperous, secure, modern, and

democratic society. Undaunted by the challenges they face, Nigerians at home and abroad

continue to strive for political, economic and socio reform that will help achieve their

common goal.

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[58] Ibid., 227.
[59] Ibid., 228.
[60] Ibid., 229.
[61] Ibid., 267.

Recommendations

The U.S. and its international partners should help Nigeria embrace, promote, and spread nationalism throughout all aspects of its society to include the media, arts, entertainment, education, industry, politics, military, police and local/regional governments. Military-to-military engagements should be ethics based, focusing attention to the ideal that the military serves the nation and its people as an apolitical institution. The UN (with active assistance from the US) must be actively engaged in Nigeria's election process, ensuring fair and peaceful elections that lead to the establishment of legitimate democratic governments. The recent election of President Goodluck Jonathan is positive step forward.

The US and its partners should seek ways to involve or connect the Nigerian diaspora directly to any and all nation building efforts. USAID efforts should garner active participation from well educated, well informed, and well intentioned Nigerian citizens living abroad to increase the effectiveness of NGO/IGO efforts. This will enable the Nigerian diaspora to have a greater impact on the advancement of their people and country. The people of Nigeria have a keen sense of awareness. There currently exists a large volume of Nigerian scholarly work that covers all aspects of national development. Collectively, they possess the wisdom, understanding and vision for a "better" Nigeria. Our goal as the U.S. should be to enable, empower and support the development of a Nigerian solution to the Nigerian problem.

Conclusion

The ethnic, regional, and religious identities of the Nigerian people are at the center of their societal issues and problems. Nigerians have often directed their grievances onto

what they perceive as a corrupt, inefficient and inept GON. The root cause of the problem really lies with their own propensity to use ethnicity, religion, and regional affiliations to complete with one another over resources, political power, economic growth, and at times survival. The solution to Nigeria's divisive culture must be grounded in nationalism, the concept that all Nigerians stand to benefit when divisive identities are suppressed for the sake of the country and its people as a whole. This movement must originate at the "grass roots level". It can be promoted and encouraged by the federal government, but it cannot be imposed through force or coercion as the GON has done in the past under the auspice of "Federal Character". True nationalism will rise above the ethnic, religious and regional tensions to achieve a common set of values, norms, and goals. True nationalism can permeate through all levels of government and help combat corruption and patronage. True nationalism can serve as a powerful incentive for the ethical conduct of its senior leadership. The next generation of political and civic leadership will provide a bulwark against corruption and the temptations of Nigeria's traditional patronage system. If the Nigerian people reject ethnic, religious, regional political identities, the government will no longer be able to use this divisiveness against them. Furthermore, true nationalism can lead to a more effective means of conflict resolution where representation and consensus can yield political decisions of weight and significance. Moving forward, Nigeria will be unable to effectively tackle its alarming poverty levels unless it is united in its efforts as a nation.

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